



JANET T. MILLS  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC  
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



HEATHER JOHNSON  
COMMISSIONER

**March 16, 2023**

**Testimony of Heather Johnson**

**In opposition to LD 586**

**An Act to Protect Maine Fisheries from the Effects of Industrial Recirculating Aquaculture Operations**

Senator Reny, Representative Hepler, and distinguished members of the Committee on Marine Resources, I am Heather Johnson, Commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development. I submit this testimony in opposition to LD 586.

The United States currently imports approximately 80% of its seafood. Global demand for meat-based protein has grown and by 2050 is set to double compared to today. Finding climate-responsible ways to grow that protein will become increasingly important and can allow us to localize the supply chain to reduce dependence on importation.

Maine has an opportunity to be part of the solution to this growing demand because of our high standards of water and air quality. It would not be in anyone's best interest to significantly degrade either. Existing fishing and farming practices will need to employ innovative strategies and techniques to meet the demand for protein development as well as offer opportunities for Maine people.

Maine has stringent requirements for new RAS facilities. We believe these existing requirements work to find the balance of protecting critical natural resources and supporting the seafood industry.

The current permitting process includes/may include, depending on the size of the project: Permits and regulations under the Department of Environmental Protection, including

- A Site Location of Development General Permit
- A Natural Resources Protection Act License
- A MEPDES Discharge Permit, with levels of required additional permit review based on volume and characteristics of the discharged water

Permits and regulations under the Department of Marine Resources, including

- Importation of live marine organisms

Permits and regulations under the Army Corps of Engineers, including

- Clean Water Act Section 404 General Permit, Maine
- Section 10 licensing may also be required

Local permits and regulations



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The Department agrees that regulation of the industry and its impacts is important, and our position is that the current permitting processes and safeguards are sufficient in this regard.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions at the work session.